

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Halesowen Special Area Committee Meeting - 7 December 2005

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Investing in the Future: Primary Schools Review

Purpose

1. This report is based on the report considered by Cabinet on 17 November. It sets out the background to the Primary Schools Review. Appendix 2 attached to this report sets out the proposals that were approved at Cabinet and is reproduced in full.
2. This report will be supplemented with a presentation that will summarise progress made since the 17 November, outline the implementation plan and invite comments on ways forward.
3. The full Cabinet report with Appendix 1 Responses to the Consultation and Appendix 2 Proposals are available on www.dudley.gov.uk

Background

4. Dudley has managed numerous changes to the pattern of schooling at several critical points over the last 60 years. Political, educational and demographic changes have led to the building of new schools, changing their sizes and closing schools. Dudley is now facing again the need to change and, with the benefit of much better information, can respond with a degree of certainty to meet the needs of children for the next 20 – 30 years.
5. The surplus of places in the Borough's primary schools was highlighted in an external consultancy report by KPMG in 1999, and in the OFSTED Inspection Reports of 2000 and 2002. The more general outcomes of the OFSTED inspection in 2000 caused a delay in the implementing of a full review and action plan, although the need for

such a review featured in the Post OFSTED Action Plan in 2000 and 2002.

6. Consultation on specific school proposals was carried out in 2002. Responses were received from headteachers, governors, councillors, parents and others. The consultation led to action in several cases including further consultation on the establishment of a new Voluntary Aided (VA) school for Halesowen to replace two existing schools.
7. The annual birth rates (using academic year September - March) in Dudley have reduced from 4,116 in 1990 to 3,344 in 2003. There was a slight increase to 3,514 in 2004 but long term projections indicate births of around 3,300. The DfES sets the minimum education budget for Dudley based on the number of pupils attending its schools. As the demand for places falls, schools will receive proportionately lower budgets, adding significantly to the difficulty for schools of meeting the costs of the quality of education to which all pupils are entitled.
8. Based on the numbers of children already born, primary pupil numbers in Dudley schools are projected to fall by a further 2,358 or 9% between 2005 and 2010. The reduction of 2,358 primary pupils will lead to an annual fall in the Council's revenue grant funding from the DfES and a reduction of £7.8m by 2010, at current prices. The figure of £7.8m is based upon a current 'per pupil' unit funding of £3,329, the DfES baseline assessment for a 'Dudley' pupil in 2005 which will be applied for calculation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2006 onwards. This data has just been released by the DfES to enable the Council to model future budget scenarios in confidence.
9. The primary sector delegated budget in the current financial year is £71.3m or 49% of the total resources delegated to schools. If the current provision of 82 primary schools were maintained with 2,358 fewer primary pupil places, it is estimated that each primary school budget would be reduced by an average of 10% by 2010. Individual primary school budgets currently range from £0.5m to £1.9m. Therefore schools could expect to see an average annual budget reduction ranging from £50,000 to £190,000 by 2010. With a projected 5,000 surplus places in the system some schools would experience much greater reductions and also considerable year-on-year instability. This is not in the best interests of children.

10. Dudley primary schools currently spend their delegated resources in the following proportions:

Staff	83%
Premises	6%
Supplies and services	11%

Premises costs are largely fixed and there is limited scope for reductions in services, learning materials and other supplies. The main focus for balancing budgets is therefore likely to be in the largest area of expenditure which is staffing. If the £7.8m reduction were directed at staffing in primary schools, this would equate to an indicative reduction of 230 posts in schools, or more than 10% of the current workforce in primary schools.

11. It has now become imperative to take action to ensure that the pattern of primary school provision is cost effective, with only sufficient surplus places to allow a degree of parental preference and in order to cope with any unplanned expansion. It is important to say that these proposals will affect every primary school in the Borough, ensuring that money is not wasted on maintaining surplus places but directed to the education of children.
12. The Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning approved the start of a consultation process on proposals to change the existing pattern of primary school provision in Dudley. The initial consultation started on 12 September and ended on 21 October. The consultation was based on three documents; Learning for the Future Primary School Review Consultation Document, Consultation Summary and Response Form. Paper copies of the documents were circulated widely and posted on the internet. The consultation process involved a series of meetings with parents, staff and governors in those schools most affected. Additional meetings were convened on request. There has been a high volume of telephone calls, letters, emails, response forms and other correspondence as set out in Appendix 1.
13. The proposals outlined in the consultation documents emerged from previous consultations on principles and process. The proposals reflected the need to address the serious issue of over 5,000 surplus primary places by 2010. This projection is based on over 2,000 surplus places already existing in 1997, numbers attending primary schools, and birth rates.

14. In-flow and out-flow of pupils to other Boroughs is projected to continue unchanged. However, this is the most optimistic position as other Boroughs are experiencing the same trends in birth rate as Dudley. During the consultation process, several alternative proposals were suggested. In addition, the Secretary of State announced that Dudley had made a successful bid for over £8 million to replace Wrens Nest Primary School and Old Park Special School. The alternative proposals have been considered carefully and some revisions included in Appendix 2.
15. The Primary Schools Review is part of 'Investing in the Future' (IIF), a wide-ranging planning framework designed to link a series of national and local initiatives into a coherent and manageable development programme. The initiatives that will impact directly on provision for children include:
- pre-school settings;
 - children's centres;
 - the Primary Schools Review;
 - the Secondary Review (including 14 – 19 strategy);
 - specialist schools;
 - the SEN strategy;
 - extended schools;
 - integrated children's services; and
 - community use including leisure, libraries and lifelong learning.
- (IIF was previously known as 'Learning for the Future', but with the development of joined up children's services it is important that the major policy framework should not be limited to learning.)
16. The Primary School Review also takes full account of the long term planning for Dudley, the Black Country and the West Midlands. The proposals in Appendix 2 take account of the relevant elements of the Unitary Development Plan, Local Transport Plan and in the emerging Black Country Study and Regional Spatial Strategy.
17. The publication of statutory notices will be undertaken in line with decisions made by the Cabinet. The planned period for publication and representations to be made is from 21 November 2005 to 2 January 2006. The School Organisation Committee will then meet to

determine each proposal. Should the School Organisation Committee not reach a decision on any proposals, it will be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

Finance

18. The Individual Schools Budget (ISB) for 2005/06 is £146.5m. This budget is delegated to 112 Dudley primary, secondary and special schools in accordance with the locally - agreed LMS Formula. Full details can be found within the Dudley Fair Funding budget statement, which is a statutory publication prescribed by the DfES in accordance with Section 52 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998.
19. The funding of school is regulated through the Financing of Maintained Schools Regulations (England) 2004 and the LEA budget, Schools Budget and Individual Schools Budget (England) Regulations 2004. From April 2006 enhanced funding will be governed by the School Finance (England) Regulations 2005.
20. The capital costs for the proposed changes will be defined through option appraisals once a decision has been reached regarding the proposed changes for each school. There will be a requirement for substantial building work to a number of schools to ensure that the proposed capacity figures for each school can be accommodated. This will include both surplus place removal and increases in size to school accommodation.
21. The Council has been informed of DfES capital allocations for pupil place planning for the financial years 2005/06 to 2007/08 and this, along with any capital receipts from site disposals, will be utilised to address sufficiency of accommodation needs of those schools remaining.
22. A further report will be made to the Cabinet on capital and buildings issues after the School Organisation Committee has made a decision on the proposals.

Law

23. The procedures relating to the establishment, alteration or discontinuance of schools are principally contained in Chapter II

(sections 28 – 35) and schedule 6 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Equality Impact

24. Investing in the Future is intended to provide the best teaching and learning opportunities for all in buildings fit for purpose, and within the resources available. Targeted teaching and learning will continue for vulnerable groups, including looked after children and those underachieving, particularly those identified by pupil level performance monitoring processes.

Proposals

25. The proposals are set out in detail in Appendix 2 which was published on 16 November.
26. The arrangements for governance, project management, work programmes and support for children, parents, schools, staff and governors are detailed in Appendix 2.

Next Steps

27. Many actions are required to ensure a smooth and effective change. These are set out in the implementation programme with some issues common to all schools and others pertaining only to individual schools. A brief summary of the main milestones are set out in the table below.

November	Letters to headteachers / chairs of governors
	Initial survey or parental preference for alternative places
	Initial discussions with proposed / potential partner schools
	Initial discussions with schools proposed for closure
	Initial discussions on capital schemes
December	Governing Body confirmation of commitment to additional responsibilities
	Schools Forum commitment to revenue support for parents, schools and staff
	Personnel support for staff
	Establishment of joint school project groups

	Admissions support for parents and children
	SEN support for parents and children
2006	
January	School project plans confirmed
	School Organisation Committee
February	Joint schools project group / Parent meetings
	Confirmation of parent preference for alternative places
Feb - Aug	Implementation of school project plans

Recommendations

27. Area Committees are requested to:

- note the report, the proposals in Appendix 2 and progress made since 17 November;
- comment on the most appropriate ways of ensuring a smooth and effective implementation programme.



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Directorate of Children's Services

**Learning for the Future
Primary Review**

**Report on Consultation and Responses
Part 2 - Proposals**

Introduction to the Proposals

This is Part Two of the report on the consultation on proposals to change the pattern of primary school provision in Dudley. The consultation on school proposals began 12 September 2005 and ended on 21 October 2005. The consultation process and the responses are set out in Part One of the report.

Part Two of the report sets out the proposals that have emerged following the widespread debate and the many responses received. Comments from councillors, governors, headteachers, parents, children and many others have been carefully considered along with all available information.

There have been a number of amendments to the original proposals. In some cases, new opportunities have arisen such as the announcement of £8 million capital funding from the DfES to replace Wren's Nest Primary and Old Park Special Schools. Other changes have stemmed from alternative proposals brought forward during the consultation or from concerns expressed.

These proposals will enable Dudley to continue its drive to create a primary school system fit for every pupil and fit for the 21st century.

- Dudley provides a sound standard of education with standards at the end of the Primary phase, broadly in line with national expectations for children at this age (11 years old).
- To maintain and further increase standards it is crucial that we provide value for money in terms of provision impacting on standards.
- If the current situation of funding surplus places continues over the coming years school budgets will diminish, class sizes will rise and provision for children will be adversely effected.
- A significant sum of money is currently being used to support schools where pupil numbers are falling. This position is not sustainable if the level of provision is to be maintained.
- Money received from central Government is dependent on the total number of pupils.

- Money allocated to schools is similarly pupil led. As numbers fall the overall budget reduces but still has to be divided between each school.
- A reduction in schools and a realignment of numbers per school will enable a more equitable and cost effective provision for all pupils.
- Retention of the status quo will result in a gradual lowering of standards and schools being unable to provide for the children in their care.
- The proposals put forward are a proactive approach to ensuring that provision for the quality of education for children in the next 10 years is secured and enhanced.

Timetable of Events

The table below outlines the broad timetable and milestones for implementation of proposals. Some of these milestones will vary for different schools.

Date	Event
17 November 2005	Cabinet Meeting
21 November 2005	Publication of Statutory Notices (21 November – 2 January)
W/C 21 November 2005	Initial letter to parents to establish an indication of which school they wish to apply to.
End of November	Discussions with Schools (Capital Projects)
December 2005	Schools Forum consider revenue support for 2006/07
End of December	Finalisation of briefs for construction work (Capital Projects)
2 January 2006	Final date for Representations (subject to publication of notices on 21 November)
26 January 2006	School Organisation Committee
27 January 2006	Letter to parents of children attending schools proposed for closure asking them to express a preference for a new school
February 2006	Asset Management Plan – review of capital allocations
March 2006	Parents informed of places allocated
Summer 2006	Admissions Appeals
31 August 2006	Schools proposed for closure effectively close.
1 September 2006	Children and staff transfer to new school rolls

Introduction to the Proposals

The following proposals take full account of the consultation debate, responses received and all available information. Subject to approval by Cabinet on 17 November 2005 they will form the basis of Statutory Notices, published in accordance with legislation and guidance.

Proposal 1 - Beauty Bank

To close Beauty Bank Primary School with effect from August 2006. The Beauty Bank buildings and site will remain open as an annexe of Greenfield Primary School for an initial period before consolidation on a single site.

The Governors of Greenfield Primary School will assume responsibility for all aspects of the Beauty Bank annexe with effect from 1 September 2006. The headteacher of Greenfield Primary School will be responsible for the overall leadership and management of both sites.

Beauty Bank staff will become part of the Greenfield Primary School staffing establishment. Beauty Bank pupils will transfer to the Greenfield Primary School roll. It is expected that current Beauty Bank staff and pupils will remain on the Beauty Bank annexe site.

The admission number for Greenfield Primary School, Hill Street site will remain at 40, as it is now. The admission number for the Beauty Bank annexe will be reduced to 20 allowing a combined admission number for Greenfield Primary School of 60. The Hill Street site has capacity for 280 places and the Beauty Bank site 208.

Greenfield and the Beauty Bank annexe will be consolidated onto a single site at the earliest opportunity.

Context

Beauty Bank Primary School has a capacity for a total of 208 children. Numbers have fallen from 197 pupils in January 1997 to 134 pupils in January 2005. The numbers of children in the area have declined over the years. There are now too few children in the area for the school to fill and become financially viable. Falling pupil numbers means that the school budget will not be sufficient to provide an acceptable level of education.

The current headteacher of Beauty Bank will take up a new headteacher position in a neighbouring authority in 2006. The Director of Children's Services will advise governors on options for ensuring the school is managed effectively during the period before its closure.

Commentary

The principles underpinning this proposal will enable children attending both schools now and in the future year groups to access the best and most appropriate education within the resources available to the Council. The proposals for Beauty Bank allow for an approach to the transitional period which will minimise disruption for pupils and parents and address many of the concerns raised during the consultation period.

The proposal will be supported so as to minimise any negative effects to children of moving schools. Unless parents wish to transfer children to alternative schools in Dudley, they will be able to use the Beauty Bank annexe for at least the next 3 or 4 years until the school can be consolidated on a single site. It is important that children are part of and contribute to any development in their school. This engagement in the design of a new school and other aspects can engender excitement in the child, a feeling of belonging and ownership of the process which has many benefits. Parents and children would have the opportunity to become familiar with and their new school, additional friends and staff.

A key concern expressed by many respondents was that the community would suffer because of school closure. This proposal retains the use of the school for extended community use in the medium term and allows for further consultation with the community about the long term use of the site.

Parents of children who attend Beauty Bank Primary School will be written to by the School Admissions Service and given the opportunity to express up to three preferences for the schools that they wish their children to attend. It is expected that most parents will express a preference for their children to continue in the Beauty Bank annexe. Should any parents opt for alternative schools, these preferences will be considered alongside the Council's Admissions Policy and the process will be planned in full consultation with parents. Places for all children will be allocated during the Spring Term 2006 for children to take up from 1 September 2006. Brothers and sisters will be allocated places at the same schools. Every effort will be made to accommodate parental requests.

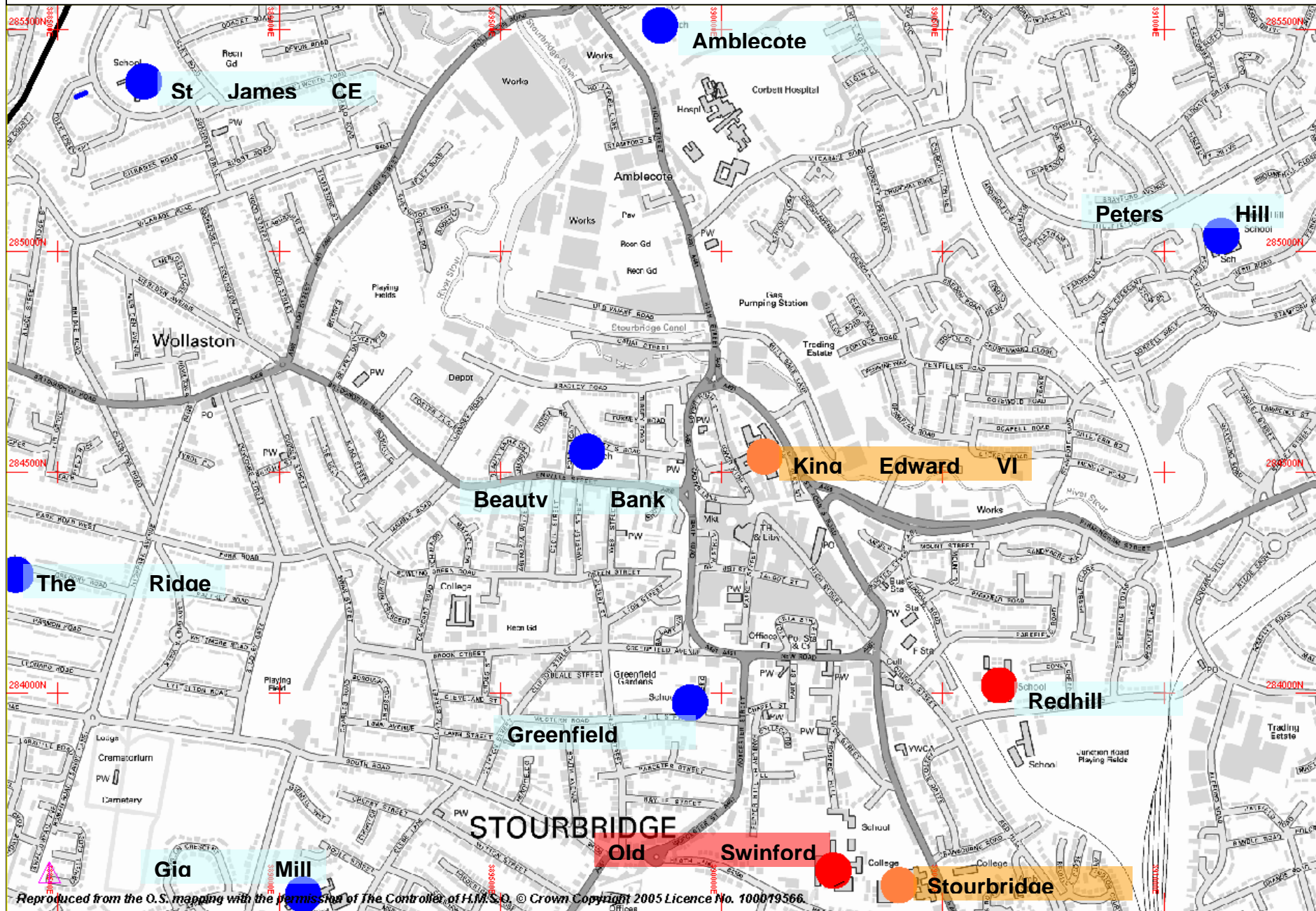
Road safety is a concern both for parents and the Council. These proposals will minimise any requirement for children to travel greater distances.

The impact on staff employment will be minimal. Staff currently at Beauty Bank Primary will transfer to the staffing establishment of Greenfields Primary School. Should any staff not wish to transfer every effort will be made to support individuals in securing alternative employment within the Dudley Metropolitan Borough.

Capacity, NOR and Proposals in the Beauty Bank Area

School	Capacity January 2005	NOR January 2005	Proposed Capacity	Surplus Places Removed
Beauty Bank	208	134	420	68
Greenfields	280	280		
Amblecote	378	308	315	63
Gig Mill	565	497	525	40
*St James CE	420	369	420	0
Totals	1,851	1,588	1,680	171

Location of Beauty Bank Primary School and nearest alternative schools



Proposal 2 - Highfields

To close Highfields Primary School, with effect from September 2006 and provide alternative places for children at Christ Church CE, Hurst Hill, and Wallbrook Primary Schools.

Additional capacity will be created at Christ Church CE Primary to expand capacity to 420 places for pupils aged 5 - 11. Current provision for younger children at Christ Church CE will continue. This building will be completed during the next academic year. Whilst Highfields Primary School will close in August 2006 the site will remain open if necessary, as an annexe to Christ Church CE Primary for those pupils who have expressed a preference for this school.

Should there be a requirement to use the Highfields Primary School buildings and site as a temporary annexe, the governors of Christ Church CE Primary will assume responsibility for all aspects during this period. The headteacher of Christ Church CE Primary will be responsible for the overall leadership and management of both sites during this period.

Posts will become available at Christ Church CE Primary and other Dudley Schools. These posts will be open to Highfields staff in accordance with the model policy.

The planned admission number at Christ Church CE will be increased from 45 to 60 from September 2006. Should the demand for places at the school from parents of children attending Highfields Primary exceed the planned capacity of 420, an agreement will be sought with the governors for a temporary additional increase to enable parental preference to be met and families to attend the same school. Similar arrangements will be reached if required with Wallbrook and Hurst Hill Primary Schools.

The governing body of Christ Church CE Primary will assume responsibility for the annexe. The day-to-day organisation and composition of both sites will be the responsibility of the headteacher.

Pupils who express a preference for Hurst Hill, Wallbrook or any other Dudley school will transfer in September 2006.

Context

Highfields Primary has a capacity for a total of 210 children. Numbers have fallen from 210 pupils in 1997 to 171 pupils in 2005. In line with the fall in birth rates, the larger numbers of pupils in older year groups are being replaced by smaller numbers of younger children. There are too few children being born or moving into the area for the school to fill and become financially viable. Falling pupil numbers means that the school budget will not be sufficient to provide an acceptable level of education.

Commentary

The principles underpinning this proposal will enable children attending the school now and in future year groups to access the best and most appropriate education within the resources available to Dudley Council. The proposals for Highfields Primary allow for an approach to the transitional period which will minimise disruption for pupils and parents and address some of the concerns raised during the consultation period.

The proposal will be supported so as to minimise any negative effects for children of moving schools. Children will be encouraged to contribute to the design of new facilities or any developments in their new schools. This engagement can engender excitement in the child, a feeling of belonging and ownership of the process which has many benefits. Parents and children would have the opportunity to become familiar with their new school, additional friends and additional staff.

A key concern expressed by many respondents to the proposals was that the current school is successful and fit for purpose with a significant amount of money spent on refurbishment during the last three years. The current proposal will enable consultation with the community on the future use of the buildings and site.

Parents of children attending Highfields Primary will be written to by the School Admissions Service and given the opportunity to express three preferences for schools that they wish their children to attend. These will be considered alongside the Council's Admissions Policy and be planned in full consultation with parents. Places for all children will be allocated during the Spring Term 2006 for children to take up from September 2006. Brothers and sisters will be allocated places at the same schools. Every effort will be made to accommodate parental requests.

Specific concerns were raised about car parking and other traffic issues around the Christ Church CE Primary School. The Council is exploring options to improve these arrangements and further information will be published as soon as possible.

Analysis of home addresses of pupils currently attending Highfields Primary suggests that for a small number of children the journey will become slightly longer. This will largely depend on the school for which a preference is expressed but the large majority of children, will as now continue to live within 0.5 mile of their nearest primary school

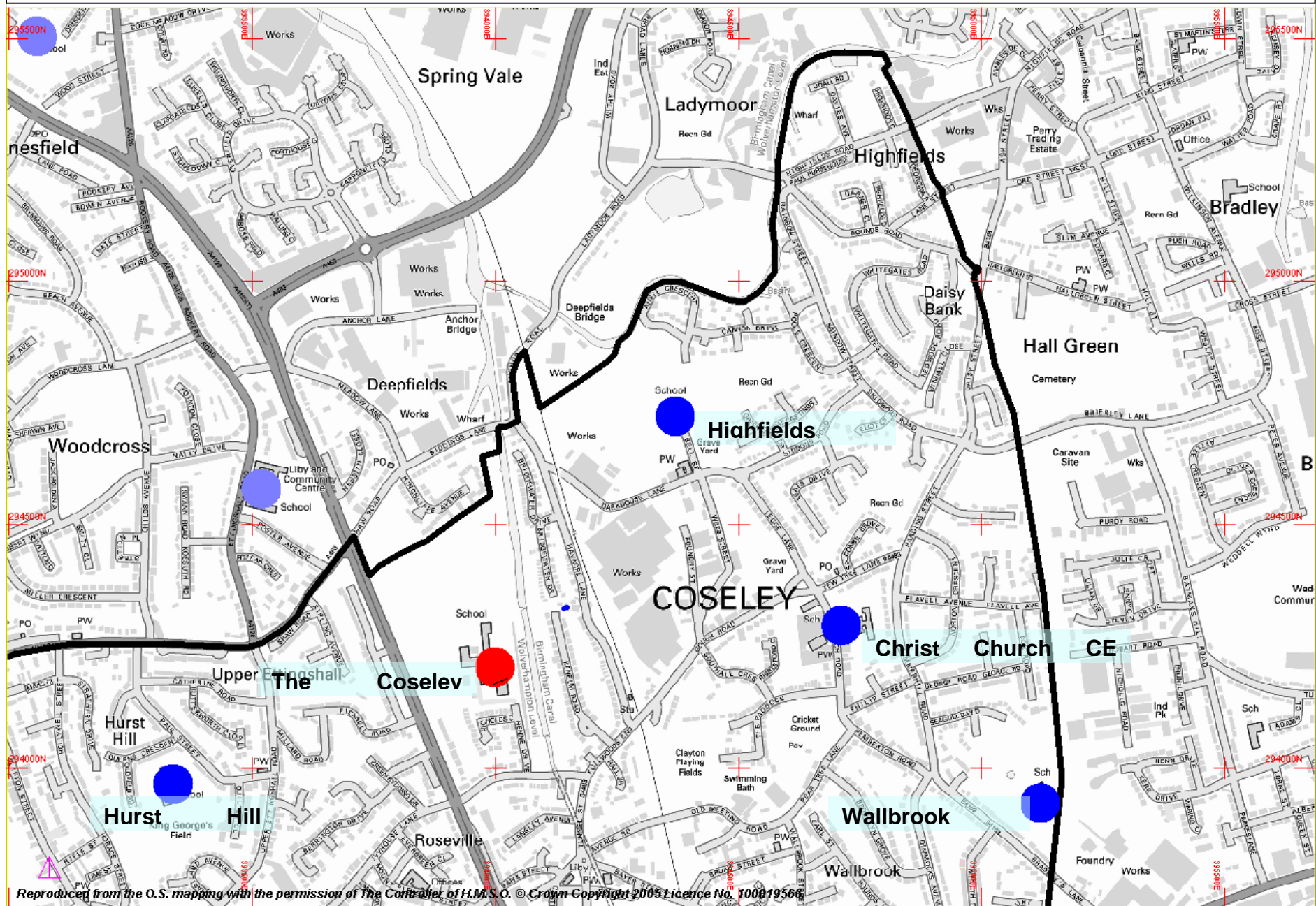
The impact on staff employment will be minimal. Some staff currently at Highfields may transfer to the staffing establishment at Christ Church CE Primary and may remain on the current site if it is required as a temporary annexe.

It is anticipated that all staff will secure alternative posts in Dudley primary schools and every effort will be made to support individuals using the model policy currently being adopted by all schools.

Capacity, NOR and Proposals in the Highfields area

School	Capacity January 2005	NOR January 2005	Proposed Capacity	Surplus Places Removed
Highfields	210	171	420	95
Christ Church	315	335		
Wallbrook	280	275	315	(35)
Hurst Hill	434	404	420	14
Totals	1,239	1,185	1,155	74

Location of Highfields Primary School and nearest alternative schools



Proposal 3 - Holt Farm

To close Holt Farm Primary School with effect from September 2006 and provide alternative places for children at Hurst Green and Olive Hill Primary Schools.

The Holt Farm buildings and site will remain open from September 2006 as an annexe of Hurst Green Primary for an initial period until consolidation on a single site. The Governing Body of Hurst Green Primary will assume responsibility. The headteacher of Hurst Green Primary will be responsible for the overall leadership and management of both sites.

Holt Farm staff will become part of the Hurst Green staffing establishment. Holt Farm pupils will transfer to the roll of Hurst Green Primary and remain on the present site until they transfer to a single site.

The planned admission number for reception in September 2006 at Hurst Green will remain at 55 until additional capacity is created to enable an increase to 60 and a total capacity for 420 children. The Holt Farm annexe will retain its current admission number and nursery provision until consolidation on the Hurst Green site. Further consultation with the community will be undertaken regarding early years and pre-school provision in the Holt Farm annexe or local area.

The planned admission number to reception at Olive Hill Primary School will be increased to 60 from September 2006. Should the demand for places from parents with children attending Holt Farm Primary School exceed the places available at Olive Hill or Hurst Green, an agreement will be sought with the governors for an additional, temporary, increase to enable parental preferences to be met and ensure families attend the same school.

Further consolidation will take place on options for consolidation onto a single site.

Context

Holt Farm Primary School has a capacity for a total of 280 children. Numbers have fallen from 296 pupils in 1998 to 187 pupils in January 2005. This reflects the overall fall in birth rates. Live birth data confirms this trend will continue to reduce the demand for places. There are too few children being born or moving into in the area for the school to fill and become financially

viable. Falling pupil numbers means that the school budget will not be sufficient to provide an acceptable level of education.

Commentary

The principles underpinning this proposal will enable children attending Holt Farm now and in future year groups to access the best and most appropriate education within the resources available to the Council. The proposals for Holt Farm Primary School allow for an approach to the transitional period which will minimise disruption for pupils and parents. Any building requirements will be completed prior to the closure of the Holt Farm annexe.

The current proposal will be supported so as to minimise any negative effects to children moving schools. It is anticipated that children will be fully engaged and contribute to the design and any other developments in their new schools. This engagement in the design of their new schools and other aspects engender excitement in the child, a feeling of belonging and ownership of the process which has many benefits. Parents and children would have the opportunity to become familiar with their new school, additional friends and staff.

A key concern expressed by many respondents was that the community would suffer because of school closure. This proposal retains the use of the school for community use in the medium term and allows for further consultation with the community about the long term use of the site.

Parents of children who attend Holt Farm Primary school will be written to by the School Admissions Service and given the opportunity to express up to three preferences for the schools that they wish their children to attend. It is expected that many parents will express a preference for their children to continue in the Holt Farm annexe. Should parents opt for alternative schools these preferences will be considered alongside the Council's Admissions Policy and the process will be planned in full consultation with parents. Places for all children will be allocated during the Spring Term 2006 for children to take up from 1 September 2006. Brothers and sisters will be allocated places at the same schools. Every effort will be made to accommodate parental requests.

Road safety is a concern both for parents and the Council. The proposal allows further opportunity to ensure that children have Safe Routes to School and traffic concerns are addressed.

Analysis of home addresses of pupils currently attending Holt Farm School suggests that for a small number of children the journey will become slightly longer but this will largely depend on the school for which a preference is expressed. The large majority of children as now will continue to live within 0.5 mile of their nearest primary school.

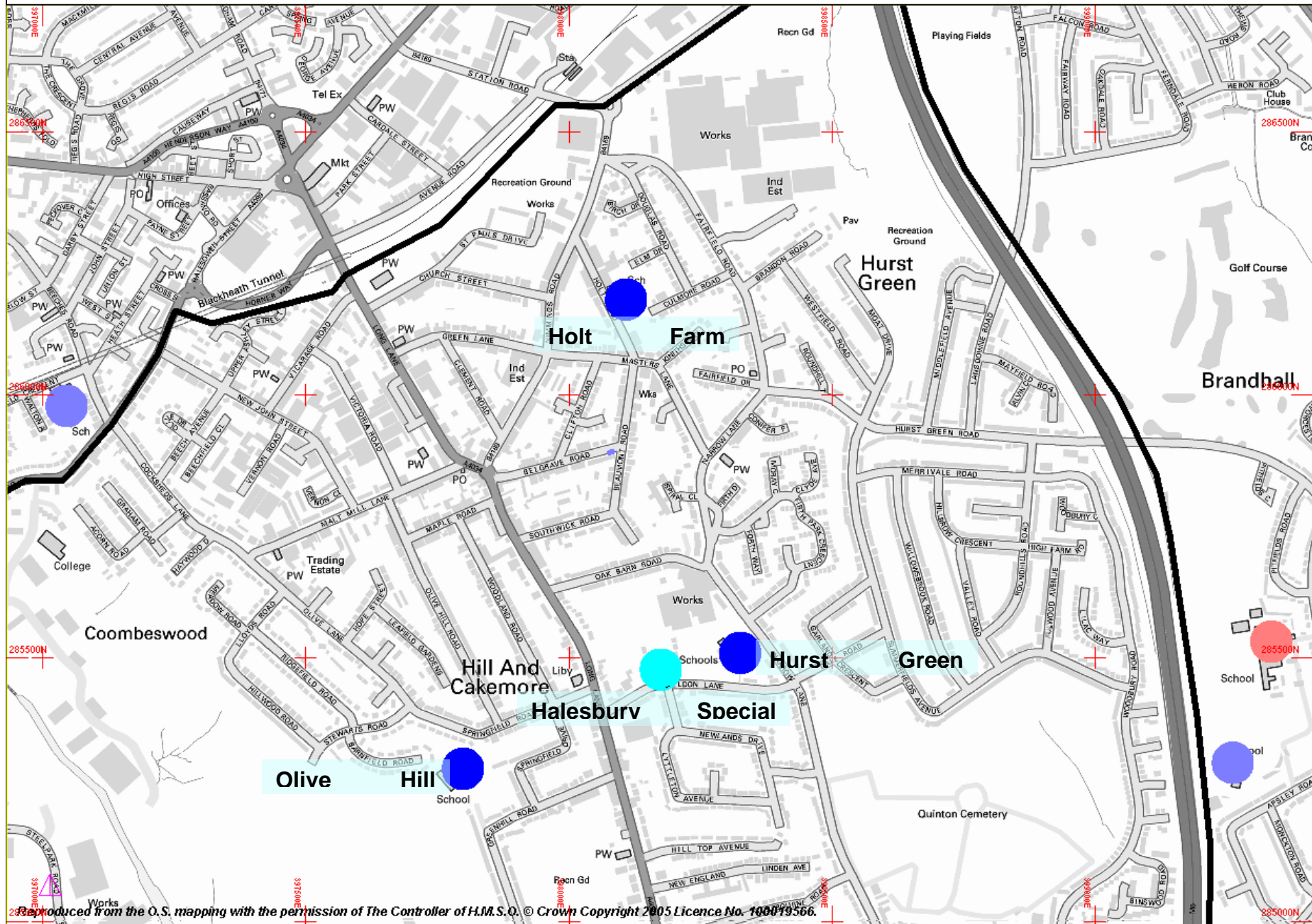
The impact on staff employment will be minimal. Holt Farm staff will become part of the Hurst Green staffing establishment. All staff will be supported in securing alternative posts at Hurst Green, Olive Hill or other Dudley Schools in accordance with the model policy currently being adopted by all schools.

Capacity, NOR and Proposals in the Holt Farm area

School	Capacity January 2005	NOR January 2005	Proposed Capacity	Surplus Places Removed
Holt Farm	280	187	420	245
Hurst Green	385	383		
Olive Hill	366	304	420	(54)
Totals	1,031	874	*840	191

The table above shows the current capacity of the three primary schools, numbers of pupils aged 5 – 11 attending in January 2005 and the proposals. The use of the Holt Farm annexe will provide additional capacity for a short period of time. The total demand for places is expected to fall below 800 over the next few years. (* Refers to table).

Location of Holt Farm Primary School and nearest alternative schools



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Map produced by the Education Information Team (HB) using the GMIS system and supported by the GMIS Unit, ICT Services

Proposal 4 - Sycamore Green

To close Sycamore Green Primary School with effect from September 2006 and provide alternative places for children at Bramford Primary School and the new Wren's Nest Primary School and Children's Centre.

The Sycamore Green site will remain open from September 2006 as an annexe of Wren's Nest Primary School and provide for those children whose parents have expressed a preference for Wren's Nest. The Governing Body at Wren's Nest Primary will assume responsibility for all aspects of the Sycamore Green annexe. The headteacher of Wren's Nest Primary School will be responsible for the overall leadership and management of both sites. It is expected that staff currently at Sycamore Green will transfer to the staffing establishment of Wren's Nest Primary School. The split site school will remain until the completion of the new Wren's Nest Primary School and Children's Centre, when all children will then be educated in the new buildings.

The planned admission number for the new school will be 60 and there will be 420 places for pupils aged 5 - 11. The new buildings will also accommodate a Children's Centre offering a range of provision for children aged 0 - 5 and their families. During the initial period of operating from two sites, the admission numbers for both sites will remain as they are now, with 45 at the Sycamore Green annexe and 60 at the Foxglove Road (Wren's Nest) site.

Context

Sycamore Green Primary School has a capacity for a total of 321 children. Numbers have fallen from 313 pupils in 1997 to 184 pupils in January 2005. There are too few children being born or moving into the area for the school to fill and become financially viable. Falling pupil numbers means that the school budget will not be sufficient to provide an acceptable level of education.

Comment

The principles underpinning this proposal will enable children attending the school and future year groups to access the best and most appropriate education within the resources available to the Council. The proposals for Sycamore Green Primary School allow for an approach to the transitional period which will minimise disruption for pupils and parents and address many of the concerns raised during the consultation period.

The proposal will be supported so as to minimise any impact to children of changing schools. It is important that children are fully engaged in and contribute to any developments. This engagement can engender excitement in children, a feeling of belonging and ownership of the process which has many benefits. In this way parents and children would have the opportunity to become familiar with their new school, additional friends and staff.

A key concern expressed by many respondents was that the community would suffer because of school closure. The current proposal retains the use of the school for extended community use in the medium term and allows for further consultation with the community about the long term use of the site.

Parents of children who attend the school, will be written to by the School Admissions Service and given the opportunity to express up to three preferences for the schools that they wish their children to attend. It is expected that parents will express a preference to remain on the Sycamore Green annexe site. Should parents opt for alternative schools these preferences will be considered alongside the Council's Admissions Policy and the process will be planned in full consultation with parents. Places for all children will be allocated during the Spring Term 2006 for children to take up from September 2006. Brothers and sisters will be allocated places at the same school.

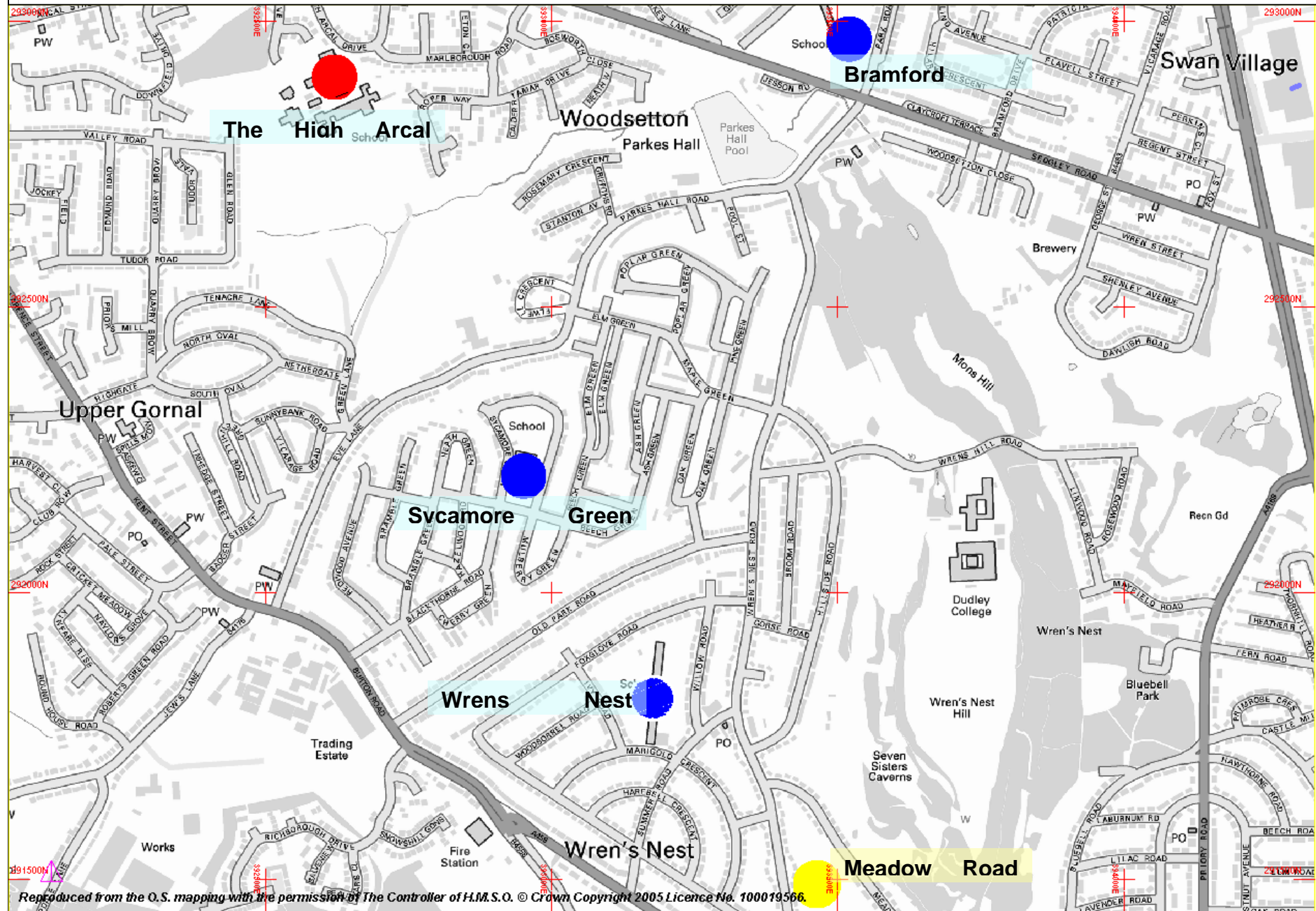
Analysis of the home address of pupils currently attending Sycamore Green suggests that for a proportion of children the journey will become slightly longer but this will largely depend on the school for which a preference is expressed support. The large majority of children will, as now continue to live within 0.5 mile of their nearest primary school. For some pupils the distance will be reduced, dependent on their expressed preference.

The impact on staff employment will be minimal. Staff currently at Sycamore Green would transfer to the staffing establishment of Wren's Nest and will remain in the annexe whilst the necessary building takes place and transfer on completion to the Wren's Nest site. It is not envisaged that there will be any staff unable to secure alternative employment within the Dudley Metropolitan Borough. Every effort will be made to support individuals in finding alternative posts in Dudley in accordance with the model policy being adopted by all schools.

School	Capacity January 2005	NOR January 2005	Proposed Capacity	Surplus Places Removed
Sycamore Green	321	184	420	331
Wrens Nest	430	305		
Totals	751	489	420	331

The table above shows the current capacity, numbers of pupils aged 5 - 11 attending in January 2005. The use of the Sycamore Green annexe will provide additional capacity for a short period of time. The total demand for places is expected to fall below 420 by the time the new building opens.

Location of Sycamore Green Primary School and nearest alternative schools



Proposal 5 - Maidensbridge

To close Maidensbridge Primary School with effect from September 2006 and provide alternative places at Church of Ascension CE, Dawley Brook and Blanford Mere Primary Schools as required.

Additional capacity will be created at each of these schools and if required at St Mary's CE Primary School. The Maidensbridge site will remain open as an annexe of one of the local schools to minimise disruption and enable completion of necessary construction work.

The preferred option is for the Maidensbridge site to remain in use as an annexe of a local primary school for a period until consolidation on a single site. This would enable children attending Maidensbridge to transfer to the roll of another local primary school while remaining on the Beechcroft Road site. Maidensbridge staff would become part of the staffing establishment of that school. This option would address many of the concerns raised during the consultation, lead to better use of the available resources, enable community use and minimise disruption.

The choice of local primary school will be the subject of further consultation with parents and primary schools in the Kingswinford North and Wall Heath area. The first stage of this process will be to consult with the governing bodies concerned before the end of December to determine options for the most appropriate partner school.

Commentary

The principles underpinning this proposal will enable children attending Maidensbridge Primary School now and in future year groups to access the best and most appropriate education within the resources available to the Council. The proposals for Maidensbridge Primary School allow for an approach to the transitional period which will minimise disruption for pupils and parents. Any building requirements will be completed prior to the closure of the Maidensbridge annexe.

The current proposal will be supported so as to minimise any negative effects to children moving schools. It is anticipated that children will be fully engaged and contribute to the design and any other developments in their new schools. This engagement in the design of their new schools and other aspects

engender excitement in the child, a feeling of belonging and ownership of the process which has many benefits. Parents and children will have the opportunity to become familiar with their new school, additional friends and staff.

A key concern expressed by many respondents was that the community would suffer because of school closure. This proposal retains the use of the school for community use in the medium term and allows for further consultation with the community about the long term use of the site.

Parents of children who attend Maidensbridge Primary school will be written to by the School Admissions Service and given the opportunity to express up to three preferences for the schools that they wish their children to attend. It is expected that many parents will express a preference for their children to continue in the Maidensbridge annexe. Should parents opt for alternative schools these preferences will be considered alongside the Council's Admissions Policy and the process will be planned in full consultation with parents. Places for all children will be allocated during the Spring Term 2006 for children to take up from 1 September 2006. Brothers and sisters will be allocated places at the same schools. Every effort will be made to accommodate parental requests.

Road safety is a concern both for parents and the Council. The proposal allows further opportunity to ensure that children have Safe Routes to School and traffic concerns are addressed.

Analysis of home addresses of pupils currently attending Maidensbridge Primary School suggests that for a small number of children the journey will become slightly longer but this will largely depend on the school for which a preference is expressed. The large majority of children as now will continue to live within 0.5 mile of their nearest primary school.

The impact on staff employment will be minimal. All staff will be supported in securing alternative posts at Church of Ascension CE, Dawley Brook and Blanford Mere or other Dudley Schools in accordance with the model policy currently being adopted by all schools.

Table 1

School	Capacity January 2005	NOR January 2005	Proposed Capacity	Surplus Places Removed
Maidensbridge	210	178		210
Church of Ascension CE	315	302	315	
Dawley Brook	252	251	315	(63)
St Mary's CE	315	246	210	105
Blanford Mere	301	253	315	(14)
Totals	1393	1230	1155	238

Demand for places in Kingswinford North and Wall Heath

Maidensbridge Primary School is proposed to close because pupil numbers in the area are falling which will mean that the school budget will not be sufficient to sustain or further improve the quality of education provided. The table below show how numbers in the area have fallen.

Kingswinford North and Wall Heath Primary Schools

School	Capacity 2005	NOR January 2000	NOR January 2003	NOR January 2005	Surplus Places January 2005
Blanford Mere	301	294	276	253	48
Church of Ascension (CE)	315	309	310	302	13
Dawley Brook	252	247	250	251	1
Maidensbridge	210	210	201	178	32
St Mary's (CE)	315	266	261	246	69
Totals	1,393	1,326	1,298	1,230	163
Surplus Places		67	100	163	

Every pupil attending every school is recorded in January each year. This gives a reasonable basis for analysing patterns over time. The above table shows how the overall number of children attending the five primary schools in Kingswinford North and Wall Heath has fallen over the last few years. This

pattern is consistent with the trends for Dudley overall and for each of the five townships Brierley Hill, Dudley, Dudley North, Stourbridge and Halesowen.

The number of live births recorded in Dudley has fallen annually from 4,111 in 1991 (calendar year) to 3,344 in 2003. The 2004 data shows a slight increase to 3,514. This increase is projected by the Office of National Statistics to be temporary with a gradual drop to 3,400 and settling around 3,300 per year until 2027. This fall in the birth rates is mirrored in the Kingswinford North and Wall Heath area. The table below shows how the annual birth rate fluctuates between years but has declined from 156 in 1992 to 118 in 2003 and 102 in 2004.

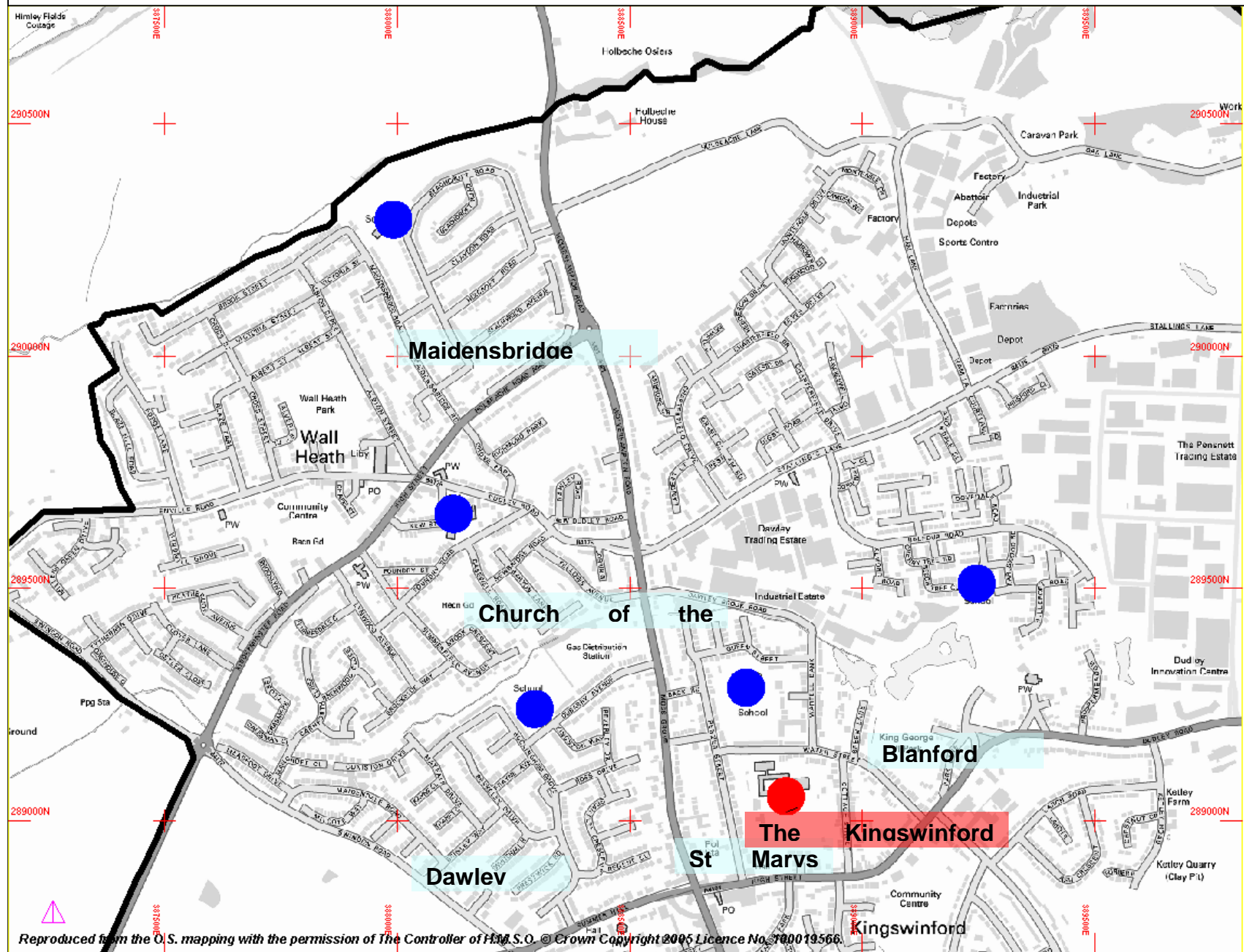
Live Births by Calendar Year - Brierley Hill Township

Ward	1992	1996	2001	2003	2004*
Brierley Hill	208	168	121	157	197
Brockmoor & Pensnett	234	201	190	191	183
Kingswinford North/ Wall Heath	156	118	97	118	102
Kingswinford South	125	117	86	91	115
Wordsley	191	159	159	139	131
Total	914	763	653	696	728

**Please note that in 2004, there were changes to Electoral Wards (both names and boundaries). Figures may not be comparable for trend purposes.*

Live births form the major part of admissions to reception classes. For example, children born in the academic year 1998-99 started reception at Maidensbridge in 2003 - 04. The fluctuations in live births corresponds with fluctuations in admission numbers to Maidensbridge over the same period. In the context of larger numbers of children in older year groups being replaced by smaller groups of younger children, Maidensbridge is not sustainable.

Location of Maidensbridge Primary School and nearest alternative schools



Proposal 6 - Mount Pleasant

To reduce the planned admission number to reception in September 2006 to 45. This will reduce the total capacity over a period of years to 315 places for pupils aged 5 -11. Provision for nursery age and younger children will remain unchanged.

Context

Mount Pleasant Primary School has capacity for 324 pupils aged 5 – 11. This capacity has been exceeded every year since 1999, largely as a consequence of admissions appeals. This means that there are more children attending Mount Pleasant Primary than there is room for. The DfES use area guidelines to calculate how much space a school should have to accommodate the number of pupils attending.

Mount Pleasant should have a gross area of approximately 1850m² for 356 pupils attending the school in January 2005. The actual gross area is 1439m². There is no possibility of increasing the area of the site as it is constrained on all sides.

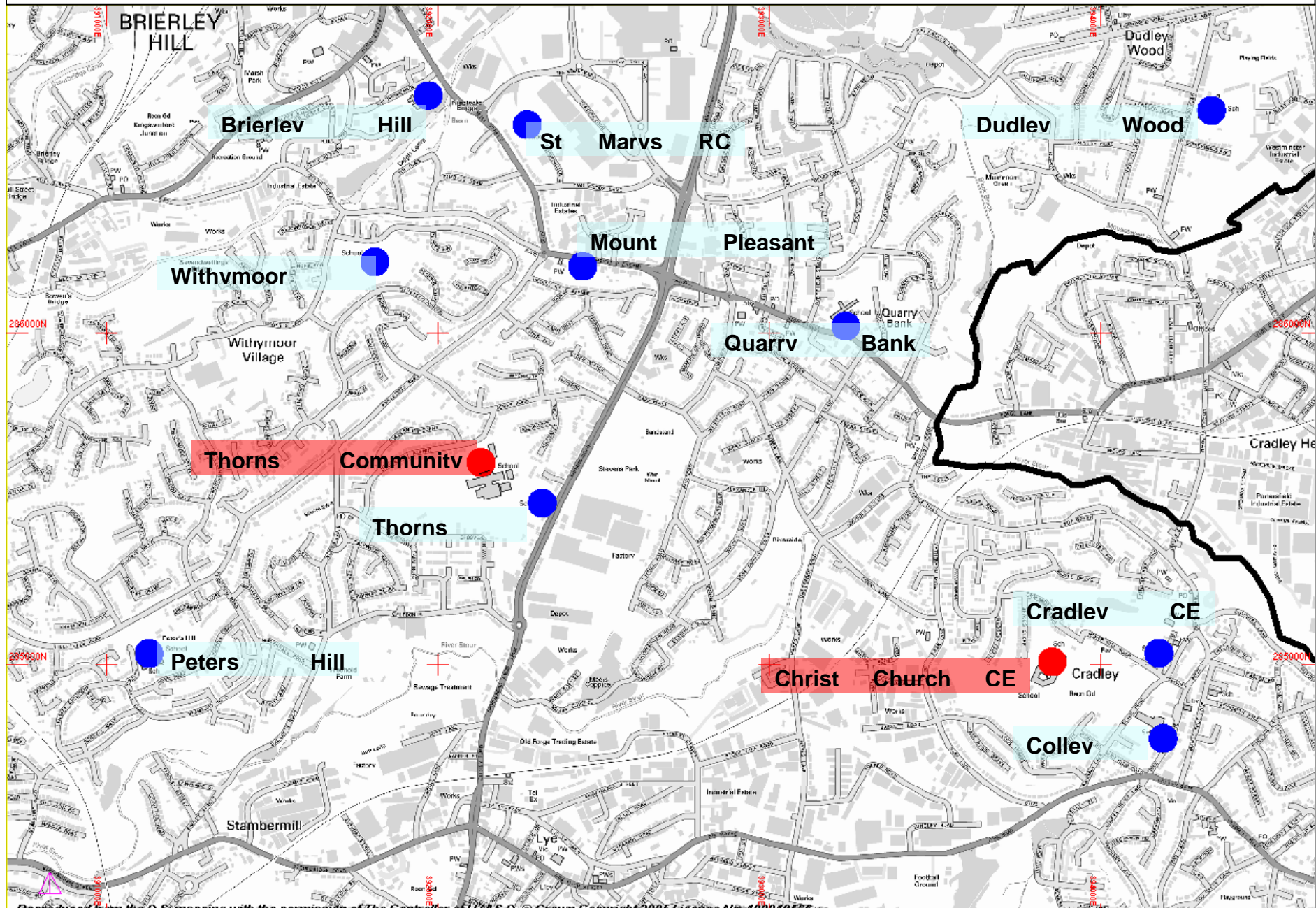
The consultation responses were largely opposed to any reduction in admission numbers partly due to perceptions of future demand for places, impact on the approach to teaching and the school budget. The Council has a responsibility to ensure all children receive the best possible education within the resources available. The proposal will create more space for children attending the school and provide a small element of protection for other schools in the area from falling pupil numbers.

The consultation responses were also largely opposed to the option of a new, fit for purpose, school on the site currently occupied by Thorns Primary School. The Chancellor in his budget speech announced extra funding for transforming primary schools. This will present an opportunity for Dudley to replace some of its primary school buildings over the next 10 - 15 years. Quarry Bank Primary has expressed interest in a replacement school and this will be considered following advice to local authorities expected in 2006.

Proposal 7 - Thorns Primary

Thorns Primary School will retain its current admission number of 30 and a capacity of 210 places for children aged 5 -11. In accordance with the duty of the Council to review school place planning on a regular basis, this will be reviewed annually.

Location of Thorns & Mount Pleasant Primary School and nearest alternative schools



Proposal 8 - Blowers Green Primary

Blowers Green Primary will retain its planned admission number of 45 from September 2006.

This is due to a localised rise in the demand for places. The position will be reviewed on an annual basis. Options are also being developed to improve the quality of accommodation available to Blowers Green. It is hoped to bring forward proposals for consultation in 2006 or 2007.

Proposal 9 - Priory Primary

Priory Primary will retain its planned admission number 90.

This is due to a localised rise in the demand for places and the position will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Proposal 10 - Netherton CE Primary

Netherton CE Primary will have a planned admission number of 45 from September 2006.

This is due to short term difficulties in meeting the demand for places if the proposed reduction to 30 were implemented from September 2006. The position will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Proposal 11 - Kate's Hill Primary

Kate's Hill Primary will retain its current planned admission number of 50.

This is due to short term difficulties in meeting the demand for places if the proposed reduction to 45 were implemented from September 2006. The position will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Proposal 12 - Lutley Primary

Lutley Primary will retain its current planned admission number of 85.

This is due to short term difficulties in meeting the demand for places if the proposed reduction to 75 were implemented from September 2006. The position will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Proposal 13 - Peters Hill

Peters Hill Primary will retain its current planned admission number of 120.

This is due to short term difficulties in meeting the demand for places if the proposed reduction to 105 were implemented from September 2006. The position will be reviewed on an annual basis.

This situation will be monitored closely to take account of any opportunities arising for potential developments in the Amblecote area including Corbetts Hospital site, the former gas works site and the canal side area around Old Wharf Road.

Proposal 14 - Brook School

Brook Primary will retain its current planned admission number of 45.

This is due to short term difficulties in meeting the demand for places if the proposed reduction to 30 were implemented from September 2006. The position will be reviewed on an annual basis

Proposal 15 - Remaining Primary Schools

All other proposals remain as set out in the consultation documents. The complete list of proposals is as follows:

School Name	Net Capacity 2005	Current NOR	Current Admissions Number	Proposed Admissions Number	Proposed New Capacity
ALDER COPPICE	428	404	60	60	420
AMBLECOTE PRIMARY	378	308	60	45	315
ASHWOOD PARK PRIMARY & HI UNIT	414	377	60	60	420
BEAUTY BANK PRIMARY	208	134	30	0	0
BELLE VUE PRIMARY	420	401	60	60	420
BLANFORD MERE PRIMARY	301	253	45	45	315
BLOWERS GREEN PRIMARY	232	238	45	45	210
BRAMFORD PRIMARY	420	422	60	60	420
BRIERLEY HILL PRIMARY	210	177	30	30	210
BROCKMOOR PRIMARY	397	326	60	45	315
BROMLEY HILLS PRIMARY	390	320	60	45	315
BROOK PRIMARY	298	244	45	45	210
CASLON PRIMARY	262	168	35	30	210
CHRIST CHURCH PRIMARY	315	335	45	60	420
CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION PRIMARY	315	302	45	45	315
COLLEY LANE PRIMARY	630	498	90	75	525
COTWALL END PRIMARY	455	422	65	60	420
CRADLEY C. E. PRIMARY	210	202	30	30	210
CRESTWOOD PARK PRIMARY	235	209	30	30	210
DAWLEY BROOK PRIMARY	252	251	36	45	315
DINGLE PRIMARY	210	198	30	30	210
DUDLEY WOOD PRIMARY	356	378	60	60	420
FAIRHAVEN PRIMARY	245	245	35	45	315
FOXYARDS PRIMARY	315	304	45	45	315
GIG MILL PRIMARY	565	497	80	75	525
GLYNNE PRIMARY	388	429	60	60	420
GREENFIELD PRIMARY	280	280	40	40	315
HALESOWEN C. E. PRIMARY (New VA Primary)	210	121	30	0	0
HAM DINGLE PRIMARY	350	372	54	60	420
HASBURY C. E. PRIMARY	330	260	45	60	420
HAWBUSH PRIMARY	306	253	54	30	210
HIGHFIELDS PRIMARY	210	171	30	0	0
HIGHGATE PRIMARY	420	322	60	60	420
HOB GREEN PRIMARY	383	280	55	45	315
HOLT FARM PRIMARY	280	187	40	0	0
HOWLEY GRANGE PRIMARY	427	413	60	60	420
HUNTINGTREE PRIMARY	420	346	60	45	315
HURST GREEN PRIMARY	385	383	55	60	420
HURST HILL PRIMARY	434	404	60	60	420
JESSON'S C. E. PRIMARY	532	512	75	75	525
KATE'S HILL COMMUNITY PRIMARY	350	335	50	50	315
LAPAL PRIMARY	312	307	45	45	315

School Name	Net Capacity 2005	Current NOR	Current Admissions Number	Proposed Admissions Number	Proposed New Capacity
LUTLEY PRIMARY	590	589	85	85	525
MAIDENSBRIDGE PRIMARY	210	178	30	0	0
MANOR WAY PRIMARY	210	206	30	30	210
MILKING BANK PRIMARY	411	421	60	60	420
MOUNT PLEASANT PRIMARY	324	356	50	45	315
NETHERBROOK PRIMARY	420	397	60	60	420
NETHERTON C.E PRIMARY	389	283	60	45	210
NEWFIELD PARK PRIMARY	420	363	60	45	315
NORTHFIELD ROAD PRIMARY	420	401	60	60	420
OLDSWINFORD C. E. PRIMARY	420	413	60	60	420
OLIVE HILL PRIMARY	366	304	52	60	420
OUR LADY & ST. KENELM R. C. PRIMARY	210	207	30	30	210
PEDMORE C. E. PRIMARY	209	222	30	30	210
PETER'S HILL PRIMARY	827	824	120	120	735
PRIORY PRIMARY	625	541	90	90	525
QUARRY BANK PRIMARY	406	306	60	45	315
QUEEN VICTORIA PRIMARY	630	582	90	75	525
RED HALL PRIMARY	486	407	60	60	420
ROBERTS PRIMARY	630	551	90	75	525
RUFFORD PRIMARY	352	243	45	30	210
RUSSELLS HALL PRIMARY	367	296	52	45	315
SLEDMERE PRIMARY	429	388	60	60	420
ST JAMES'S C. E. PRIMARY	420	369	60	60	420
ST JOSEPH'S R. C. PRIMARY - Stourbridge	210	231	45	30	210
ST. CHAD'S R. C. PRIMARY	210	203	30	30	210
ST. JOSEPH'S R. C. PRIMARY - Dudley	205	201	30	30	210
ST. MARK'S C. E. PRIMARY	315	277	45	45	315
ST. MARY'S C. E. PRIMARY	315	246	45	30	210
ST. MARY'S R. C. PRIMARY	210	169	30	30	210
STRAITS PRIMARY	350	320	50	45	315
SYCAMORE GREEN PRIMARY	321	184	45	0	0
TENTERFIELDS PRIMARY	308	268	45	30	210
THE BROMLEY-PENSNETT PRIMARY	360	289	60	45	315
THE C.E. OF ST. EDMUND & ST JOHN	315	224	45	30	210
THE RIDGE PRIMARY	210	197	30	30	210
THORNS PRIMARY	210	182	30	30	210
WALLBROOK PRIMARY	280	275	40	45	315
WITHYMOOR PRIMARY	405	350	60	60	420
WOLLESCOTE PRIMARY	610	439	87	60	420
WREN'S NEST PRIMARY	430	305	60	60	420

Dudley Strategy for Children with Special Educational Needs

The Council adopted this strategy in July 2005. There are opportunities to align the Primary Schools Review and the SEN Strategy in several ways.

Paragraph 52 states:

“Serving every township there will be:

- one primary Additional Resource Centre

Over time, these services may be enhanced by health and social support”.

Proposals for these areas will be developed in due course.

Children’s Centres

Dudley has reviewed funding to establish Children’s Centres to provide a broad range of services for children aged 0 - 5 and their families.

The first phase is already in operation. Netherton Park Children’s Centre, Kate’s Hill/Sledmere and Brierley Hill Children’s Centre are open. Wrens Nest and Priory Children’s Centre will open in early 2006 and Lye, Rufford, Wollescote Children’s Centres in late 2006.

Proposals will be developed over the the next few months regarding the location of a further eleven Children’s Centres. When completed, the DfES target of seventeen Children’s Centres for Dudley will have been achieved.